Book 7
Radio New York

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Chapter 1

Nightmare Nonsense

It was a dark, flustered night. Nothing was present except unlit, empty houses, a dead, black sky, and the large moon gazing upon the skies. Unlike the sleepless streets of Times Square, the suburbs were quiet and calm, most especially at night. The time of highest noise in the suburbs were when children play in the streets. Otherwise, the loudest noise coming out from the streets are either dogs, cars driving by or water hoses splashing onto someplace.

In an ordinary boy's house, it was just like any other. Quiet and dim. Nobody was awake.

The boy in question was Bruno. A simply average boy like no other, ignoring the fact that he went through surprising events the day prior. Nonetheless, he still dreamed peacefully… well… peacefully would be too nice of a word to put to his dream. Bruno's dream wasn't anything like a normal dream. It was much more horrific, at least later onto it.

It started with Bruno dreaming about the main characters of My Little Pony, that being the Mane Six. He was riding on one of the members, Applejack. Applejack is his favorite pony out of the main cast, so it's no surprise that he even rid on her. He rid on her as if she's a real horse.

"Giddy up, Applejack!", Bruno laughed. Applejack did a kick before dashing along Ponyville, which is the main setting of My Little Pony. Bruno was laughing, closing his eyes and enjoying the rushing winds that gusted along his short hair. Beside him and Applejack were the rest of the main cast, Twilight Sparkle, Fluttershy, Pinkie Pie, Rainbow Dash and Rarity. He didn't open his eyes so he didn't get to see them.

Suddenly, he was teleported to be on a filly, who is a young pony. The filly is Apple Bloom, Applejack's younger sister. She was with her best friends, Scootaloo and Sweetie Belle. Bruno opened his eyes just to find this once he noticed that his pony is smaller. Surprisingly, Apple Bloom was as fast as her older sister. Bruno didn't mind this since he likes Apple Bloom and her friends.

After some more galloping and laughter, Bruno suddenly got teleported to ride on… Alex? Bruno noticed immediately because he was riding on a human… on four

legs! “Alex!?”, he exclaimed. Alex was neighing when right before he knew it… Bruno got teleported to the cafeteria of his school!

“Don’t tell me things are going to get weirder”, Bruno worried himself.

Bruno got approached by Aster and Blossom, and only them. Strangely enough, none of Bruno’s classmates or Alex were even close to him. He was all on his own. He didn’t mind that either way. “Hello Bruno”, Aster greeted with a menacing presence. Bruno stared at Aster, confused. He shook his head to inadvertently shake his mind off of the weird vibes he has been getting. “Hey… guys?”, Bruno greeted back with a confused and concerned tone.

Aster and Blossom stared at Bruno for a while before they told him something. “We saw what you’ve done”, Blossom told Bruno. Bruno looked around, confused as ever. “Done what?”, Bruno asked. Aster stomped, getting closer to Bruno. Bruno started sweating. “Don’t act stupid, Bruno! You know YOU LIED TO US!”, Aster yelled, his voice somehow getting stronger in volume.

Bruno’s eyes widened so high that he suddenly got teleported someplace else yet again. He’s in a black area now. A black void of nothing. Bruno thought he went blind until he saw his hands in front of him.

Bruno started to flow a teardrop out of his eyeball as he lifted his head up from looking down. Bruno frantically scanned around the place, walking silently. Footsteps were the only noise being made. “What’s going on…? Is this a dream?”, Bruno asked.

All of a sudden, a loud voice can be heard. It wasn’t any voice he ever heard of in his lifetime. It sounded devilish, it said “It’s more than a dream… IT’S A NIGHTMARE!”.

Bruno screamed. He started running and running and running.

His running caused him to run through many places and path, all relating to… Aster and Blossom for some reason. Bruno kept looking around, spinning his head to see what’s going on.

“You know what you did, Bruno”, the two voices kept repeating.

Bruno screamed hard to try to make it stop, but the voices won’t go away. Bruno ran even more. The faster he went, the more copies of Aster and Blossom are made, repeating the phrase over and over again. “I DON’T UNDERSTAND!”, Bruno cried.

Bruno reached an edge. His breath almost went out in shock. Bruno then led out a determined face as he looked down at the bottom of the cliff that the edge

made. At the bottom was pure water. There wasn't even land next to it. Bruno turned behind at all the Asters and Blossoms, then jumped out as some sort of last resort to get away.

Bruno was swimming as best as he could. Before he could try to resurface with his puffed cheeks, he saw a giant shadow monster, resembling Utter Darkness with the smile carved into his face without any eyes. Well, none until it opened. "I'M ALWAYS WITH YOU", the menacing voice shouted. Bruno led out a bloodcurdling scream, his tongue twisting in motion. His body went straight once he saw it. Bubbles covered Bruno's body.

Suddenly, Bruno woke up from bed. He was gasping for breath. It's almost like he just got out of the watery dream. "WAH!", he cried once he rose up from his bed. His sporty blanket flung out of his body. Bruno's hair was crazy, but he couldn't care. He was looking around, flustered and scared about what just happened.

"What…?", Bruno asked.

Aster and Blossom suddenly came into Bruno's view, coming from behind his blanket. "Good morning, Bruno!", Blossom wished. Bruno screamed, then stopped once he realized that it's actually Aster and Blossom. "Oh, it's you two", Bruno sighed.

Bruno took a closer look at his more familiar environment, just to realize that he's in his bedroom, yet Aster and Blossom are there. "Wait, how are you here?", Bruno asked while pushed his blanket away. Aster and Blossom gave side-eyes at each other, then a full eye to Bruno. "You accidently drove us here last night", Aster answered.

Bruno silently blinked with an awkward feeling inside him. He was staring at him. He smiled at the same time, taking eye contact away from them and putting his hand next to his hair. "Right", he chuckled.

Blossom facepalmed with a smile and shook her head. "I think my mom was tired. Being a boss is hard, you know?", Bruno added. Aster raised his eyebrow. "Your mom is a boss? Of what?", Aster asked. Bruno turned to Aster and made eye contact with him. "Her hotel company. She's running it with the founder of the hotel. Its name is Golden Bars Hotel or something", Bruno answered.

Blossom gasped with metaphorical starry eyes.

"You mean your mom is… JAIDEN RAY!?!", Blossom squealed.

Bruno's mother came into the room as she always does in the morning. She chuckled with a warm smile. "I sure am", she replied. Blossom jumped along the room while Aster smirked.

“Nice to meet you, Jaiden Ray! My aunts and uncles would always stay at your hotel just to visit me and my family!”, Blossom said while shaking Jaiden’s hands. Jaiden chuckled.

Aster blew a strand of his hair away from him as he sarcastically says “First your father is a well-known police investigator, then you’re an author of a novel series that’s been in the making until the future, THEN your mother’s the boss of some fancy hotel! What’s next, your brother will be the next Thomas Eddison?”. Bruno giggled.

Jaiden walked closer into the bedroom and was next to Bruno. Then she noticed something. “Oh right… I forgot I took you two here!”, Jaiden laughed, her eyes closing as her body shakes in joy. “Oops! That’s on me!”, she added. She stopped laughing and got a grip on herself, later assuring “Don’t worry, I’ll take the two of you to your actual homes”.

Jaiden held Bruno by the shoulder and looked at Aster and Blossom, who were in front of them. “For now, I’ll make breakfast for the two of you. I already made yours, Bruno”, Jaiden told them. Bruno nodded, grinning a lot since he knew she made pancakes for him. Mrs. Ray would always make pancakes for Bruno on Saturdays and he loves it.

“Have a great time”, Jaiden wished the others once she walked out of the room and then stepped downstairs.

“Bye Mrs. Ray!”, Blossom wished back.

Blossom squealed once again. Her cheeks all red. “Gee, Blossom. I think you should lower your volume a bit—you’re about to blast our eardrums!”, Aster snickered. Blossom, after jumping around a bit, kept herself steady. “Sorry!”, she apologized.

Aster seemed happy, but Bruno strangely wasn’t. He wasn’t for a reason actually.

Bruno sighed, pounding his chest afterward. Bruno’s fists clenched once he stood still. A talk was what he was getting ready for.

“What’s wrong?”, Blossom asked, being the first one to notice. Aster noticed once Blossom asked so. Bruno let himself go, telling them “I know the two of you probably don’t care but: I had this weird nightmare about the two of you”.

Aster and Blossom stood blankly and blinked the same way as they stood. Bruno sweated. He hates situations like this. Awkward silence kills him—figuratively of course.

“What **kind** of nightmare?”, Blossom asked. Aster squinted his eyebrows; his thick eyebrows fell in the middle of his eye sockets. “Yeah, you could’ve been a little bit more… specific?”, Aster suggested.

Bruno sighed, looking away from them by jumping on his bed. He stared at the gray-painted roof as he described everything that occurred.

The nightmare felt so real, it almost felt like it could come true at any point—discounting the yelling, disembodied heads of Aster and Blossom yelling at Bruno of course.

The ending of it… made Bruno feel the most uncomfortable.

Bruno’s excessive fear of the dark seemed to have flared up once again. It felt so sudden, though. The day before he felt completely fine—free of any nyctophobic nightmares. Yet, just the next night the world is going to crumble down because of an evil demon monster that Bruno just met is planning to take over the world.

It’s not controversial to say that those thoughts are heavy pressure for a teenager like Bruno.

Things went north for Bruno after he told Aster and Blossom. They gasped. Their faces resembled a smile, but they weren’t. As a matter of fact, they were feeling the complete opposite emotion.

“We had that dream too!”, Blossom exclaimed.

Aster’s eyes wrinkled up, and grew at the same time. He was fearful. Not so usual since Aster is seen as a tough guy. “How could this happen?”, he questioned.

“Wait, so you’re saying you dreamed about riding on ponies?”, Bruno asked.

Blossom shook her head, then gestured her hand to messaged out a “no”. “We weren’t! We dreamed about the last part”, Blossom answered.

Aster smirked, turning a complete flip on his previous emotion. “Trust us, you don’t want to know what we dream of before that”, Aster added.

Bruno blinked, not understanding what Aster meant—probably because he was too innocent to.

“Let’s just ignore that: What matters here is that darkness thingy! What does that mean?”, Bruno asked. Blossom shrugged, while Aster’s facial expression couldn’t scream anything other than “I don’t know and I don’t care”. “How should we know?”, Blossom asked. Bruno sighed, turning his head down. “Fair point…”, he responded in defeat.

Bruno got out of his bed that he was apparently sitting on the entire time he was explaining to Aster and Blossom. Bruno stepped out of the room, climbing down the

stairs afterward. Aster and Blossom were following him since they didn't know any place in the house other than Bruno's bedroom.

While following Bruno through the top floor, they noticed how many nooks and crannies were present in the house. There were many shelves for books (an entire row is dedicated to the Extraordinary books), and a cabinet table for necklaces, file documents for Mr. Ray's investigations, hotel records, and old school worksheets.

Right beside these cabinets and shelves were the rooms to each of the family members. Bruno's room was in the front room of the floor, while Piper and the parents' rooms were on the left and right sides respectively. Bruno's room was originally for his parents', but after Bruno began to write the books and invest himself into gaming, his parents decided to move Bruno to their room.

Aster and Blossom got to see Piper's room door first. The door had a sign. It was a paper stuck onto the door with tape, saying "DO NOT ENTER". Aster scoffed at that sign, not believing anything will even follow it. On the other side, there was an empty door that belongs to the parents' room. They share a giant room with a king bed that they share.

While Bruno's room was on the right of his parents' room, the left of the room was a ladder to the attic. The opposite of the ladder was the door to the collective bathroom for guests.

"Wow, Bruno. This house sure is full of rooms", Aster said while in awe. He and Blossom were walking down the stairs with Bruno too. Bruno snickered, and spat a bit on the following step, saying "Oh please. There's only, like, 4 rooms upstairs and a single one down".

When they reached downstairs, Aster glared at Bruno. "What?", Bruno asked. "Don't be surprised if we get surprised, Bruno. I and Aster, well, have been living in different conditions. Like how I live in an apartment with a single bedroom for three people", Blossom told Bruno. Aster tapped his toes on the ground, making rhythmic noises. "And I live in a small house near a haunted one", Aster added.

Bruno smiled awkwardly while sweating and giggling. He even pulled his bowtie.

Bruno realized something as soon as he touched the collar. "Wait… Have we been sleeping in our prom outfits the entire night?", Bruno asked.

Bruno, Aster and Blossom went to a nearby mirror and realized that they were. They stared at each other. Piper, who was there watching all along, laughed hysterically. "Oh my gosh! Have you guys really been that tired? Haha!", Piper laughed. The three looked so done with Piper. They continued on with their day.

Chapter 2
Crimes in Poetry

Two days later, on Monday, Bruno, Aster and Blossom got to school by bus. They wore… interesting clothes. They collectively yawned while getting down from the bus. As they were doing so, stares were being directed at them. They didn't notice the eyes crossing them though. They walked through the hallway full of lockers and stairs to their classrooms, seemingly half-asleep.

Bruno looked at Aster and Blossom, his vision blurry as ever. He felt his pants flowing under him, still ignoring it. "Still can't believe our parents left us alone like that, Blossom", Aster said to break the silence. Blossom nodded while lifting her hand to cover a yawn. "At least staying at Bruno's is better than staying at home…", Blossom replied with tired eyes.

Chuckles came from a distance. That distance got closer to them. It was from Team Toxic, all collectively laughing. "You could say that twice!", Kyanide taunted. Bruno, Aster and Blossom stared blankly at Team Toxic, their eyes finally wide. "Good morning guys…", Bruno wished. Vlad snickered, then saying "Don't brush off that attire!".

The three exchanged glances at each other. "That… attire?", Bruno asked.

"Tsk, can't you see? You've switched clothes", Ivon pointed out.

The three shocked out, then noticed it. "You could've avoided that if you guys don't have abusive parents", Laurel taunted. Aster turned red, then rolled up his supposed sleeves. "You guys have abusive parents too!", he yelled back.

"It's fine. We can switch", Bruno assured the two.

"Ooh, and I get to see you guys being… mmm…", Blossom swooned.

Aster and Bruno turned red in either embarrassment… or… in some other way. They brushed their pupils away from Blossom.

After that, Team Toxic walks along the hallway. It was 8:30 AM, so it wasn't time for classes yet. Students are allowed to roam free before class time, which was before 9:00 AM.

Bruno, Aster and Blossom were ticked off by what happened, though Blossom was a lot less than the former two, mainly because she got to… well… yeah. She fortunately didn't get to see that, but still, she was thrilled by the thought of it.

"So, what happened in your weekend sleepover?", Mercury asked in interest. Mercury tends to be the person who does the asking in the group. He always finds a way to be interested in a conversation's topic. Nobody knows if he's faking it or not though, not even his other members.

"Well, Mrs. Ray gave us lots of cookies!", Blossom smiled. Laurel gasped hardly, so much that she almost swallowed her lungs! That stopped the gang from walking. "COOKIES!?", she yelled. Everyone giggles. "Only if you don't have abusive parents, huh?", Aster mocked. Laurel scoffed in anger.

"Oh! Bruno's little brother kept annoying us while we were trying to watch a horror movie about black monster thingies, and Mr. Ray told us about his police job!", Blossom added. Aster snickered with an unusual snide smile. "Mr. Ray is surprisingly friendly to us", he added, crossing his arms and letting himself lean in front of the wall. His left leg bended to keep himself standing.

"My mom told us a bedtime story too, since she knew about the nightmares we've been having", Bruno told. That somehow caught the team's interest. "What's that bedtime story?", Mercury asked. "It's the three little pigs!", Blossom answered. "It's a bit different, so we'll tell you", Aster added.

Bruno cleared his throat. "My mom tells me this story every night back when I was in Brooklyn", Bruno said. "It goes…", he continued.

"Once upon a time, there were three little pigs. Let's call them: Johnny, Aurora, and Rumpel. They plan to build houses for themselves. Rumpel built a house out of straw. Aurora built a house out of sticks. Johnny took some time and built a house of out bricks.

Rumpel and Aurora always taunted Johnny when he was building the house, since they were relaxing. Johnny told them that bricks would be safer than stickss and straws, but they didn't care.

After a while from settling into their houses, the pigs encountered a big bad wolf. The wolf growled as he looked for his next meal.

He saw the house made of straw first. He blew it. Blew, blew, blew! The winds took the straw away into the air.

Rumpel ran to the house made of sticks. He warned Aurora about the wolf. Before they knew it, the wolf had already come in front of their house. Like with the straw house, the wolf blew. Blew, blew, blew! While the sticks was tougher than the straw, it wasn't enough. The winds took the sticks away into the air.

Rumpel and Aurora ran to the third pig's house frantically. Once they came in and locked the doors, they explained to Johnny about the wolf and their houses. Johnny told them that they should've listened to him. They apologized. The wolf came. He expected to blow the bricks away like he did with the straw and the sticks. However, that didn't work. Blow, blow, blow. That didn't work. "What happened?", the wolf wondered. The wolf left in defeat.

The pigs lived happily ever after."

"Aww! It's just like the original!", Kyanide smiled. Bruno nodded. The school bell rang. The eight jumped. "Oh no! We got to get to class!", Blossom worried.

Bruno looked around the group just to not find Vlad. Bruno approached Ivon and Laurel as they were walking to… a class. "Hey, do you know where Vlad is?", Bruno asked. Ivon turned back and smiled awkwardly. "Oh. Vlad's still out of town", Ivon answered.

Bruno sighed and frowned. "Oh…", he frowned.

Ivon and Laurel smiled and closed their eyes. They continued their way to their mystery class. Bruno noticed and decided to stop them. "Hey, where are you going?", Bruno asked. Bruno ran to them, eager to find out where they're from. However, they pushed Bruno away. "Sorry, we can't really tell you", Laurel replied. Laurel and Ivon ran as fast as they could, even faster than usual.

Bruno was left speechless and confused. Nonetheless, he got himself up and rushed back to class.

On his way, Bruno's shirt started flinging across the air, endlessly. He suddenly bumped into a classmate—Connor to be specific. The bump led the two of them apart from each other and hit the ground.

Bruno and Connor had closed eyes once bumping into each other. They opened it.

“Connor! I’m so sorry!”, Bruno apologized as soon as he got up and approached Connor. Connor’s hair was ruffled up, much more than usual. Connor got up thanks to holding Bruno’s hand.

“It’s ok”, Connor replied.

The two walks up to the class. Connor noticed something about Bruno. His notice caused him to talk on his own for once. That also broke the silence.

“Where is Vlad?”, Connor asked, stumping Bruno. It locked the two to be in front of the door and at the end of the Class 2 and 4 area. “Oh, Vlad is in holiday right now. He’s out of town to see his relatives”, Bruno explained. Bruno knew that he lied deep down, but he had to. He didn’t want Connor to know the truth, so he had to lie. It’s all from a promise between Bruno and Team Toxic after all.

“Oh”, Connor replied. Bruno blinked. The two continued their way to the classroom, awkwardly now. Bruno would’ve thought that Connor would say something, but perhaps not. He shouldn’t expect much from a quiet kid anyways.

The two arrived to the class, both being the last ones to arrive. It’s unusual since Connor is always the first one to come. However, Connor didn’t arrive since he did as the first one, like always. Connor only went to the bathroom and came back just to bump into Bruno. The last one is mostly either Craig or Maverick.

“Bruno, where were you?”, Alex asked. Bruno instantly noticed Alex and dashed his way to his seat, placing his bag behind and clinging onto his seat as if it’s wearing it, then kept his supplies and books on the table.

Bruno grinned in an embarrassed way. “Sorry. I was just talking to Team Toxic”, Bruno apologized.

Nadia suddenly joined the conversation by saying, “Yeah, I heard they went out of town during the weekend”. Bruno noticed and turned back to see maliciously grinning Nadia and Bella. “But I didn’t go with them. Neither Aster and Blossom. We stayed at my home”, Bruno replied. Bella led out an odd cat face then. “Why?”, Bella asked, singing it in a harmony a bit. Bruno sweated, biting his mouth. He was resistant in telling the truth since he didn’t want to be embarrassed. “They wanted to

stay with me", Bruno lied. "Oh", the girls responded. Bruno smiled, instantly turned back to the front.

Alex poked Bruno's shoulder, almost pushing him. "Hey!", Bruno growled. Alex's eyebrows were slanting downwards, indicating that he's furious at Bruno for a reason. "Sorry, I just want you to know that you lied to them… or you lied to me", Alex said. Bruno raised his eyebrow, then realized what he meant. Once he did, he gazed around the room, stopping at Alex's face.

"Alex, I had to. It's an agreement I had with Team Toxic. I only told you the truth because you're my best friend and I can trust you the most out of everyone I know", Bruno whispered while explaining.

Alex's face went quiet and softened.

"Oh…", Alex simply replied.

Alex got back to his original position. Bruno brought his backpack to under his table and examined it in case he was missing anything for class. That's when he found the Extraordinary books lying about.

"Oh. I forgot that I took these out of my shelf last night", Bruno said to himself as he pulled out the books into the wooden-textured table.

Alex stared at it curiously, his hands leaning his head downwards on the tabletop. "Aren't those the supernatural books you found weeks ago?", Alex asked. Bruno nodded. Bruno took one of the books—Book 7—and flipped to page 13.

"Look at this! Book 7, Page 13: "Oh. I forgot that I took these out of my shelf last night", Bruno said to himself as he pulled out the books into the wooden-textured table". Isn't it funny how that's what's happening now?", Bruno asked.

Alex's eyes widened in fear, shock and confusion. "Alex's eyes widened in fear, shock and confusion", Bruno read. He snickered while Alex kept glancing around the room, wondering if someone was watching him while Bruno was reading.

"What is up with these books?", Alex asked. Bruno shrugged, shutting the book. "I don't know—that's why I haven't discovered what was up with them yet", Bruno replied. Alex scouted the books to find some later books and then realized something.

“Bruno. If these books are about any point in time, including now, and later onto our future school years, then what says that any of these books don’t document when you figure these books out?”, Alex asked the possibility.

Bruno froze. He squealed like a squeaky toy after.

“Alex, you’re a genius!”, Bruno said while shaking Alex. Alex pushed Bruno away to avoid any personal space. He hates having his personal space broken after all. “Everyone tells me that, Bruno”, Alex replied. Bruno giggled as he scoured through the books.

Alex soon realized something else. “I don’t know why, but I feel like I’m… reading my own best friend’s books…”, Alex said. Bruno stopped his scouting and turned back to look at Alex. Alex’s face was turning down. His blonde hair seemingly covered his face, but he was just facing down. “You technically are”, Bruno replied with truth.

Bruno turned his books, then took the first three that he originally wrote himself. He got Alex up forcefully with his hands and gave all three to Alex on his lap. “I’ll tell you what: Why don’t you read all of these, then solve the books? You’re into reading anyways”, Bruno suggested.

Alex looked at the covers, reminding himself of Bruno. He grinned, nodding afterward. “If it’s for you: Then sure”, Alex agreed. Bruno squealed the same way he did before. Bruno took the remaining future books back to his bag. Meanwhile, Alex took the third book and opened a random page. It was page 16. He chuckled. “Hey, this is when we first met!”, Alex said.

He sighed as soon as he started to have the feeling that… something he knows is watching him… perhaps… it’s himself?

“Bruno. I don’t know why, but…”, Alex sighed. He shut the book, trying to ignore it for something else. “What’s wrong?”, Bruno asked.

“I feel like I’m reading myself. Like, actually reading myself. I’m reading myself right now. You’re making me do this, aren’t you? You’re making me love these books, Bruno. I know you are”, Alex said.

Bruno was left baffled. “What…?”, Bruno asked, his eyes twitched.

“You’re not tying these loose ends. You’re going to leave me confused”, Alex said. Bruno rolled his eyes and crossed his arms. “You’re leaving **me** confused, Alex. What do you mean by all of this?”, Bruno asked frantically.

Alex sighed. He kept his hands to himself, literally, and looked downwards, away from Bruno. “Nevermind”, he replied. Bruno was utterly confused. Unlike Alex, he isn’t self-aware of whoever’s reading right now… or is he?

“Beware this, Alex. The books might document my worst side”, Bruno suddenly warned. Alex got shocked and turned back to see Bruno. “Your worst side? This is what I mean, Bruno. You’re making everything complicated by being cryptic, you need to—“. Alex got stopped by Bruno who bashed on the floor with his foot, making a loud stomping noise. “Can we stop talking about this?”, Bruno asked to avoid the conversation. Alex stared for a moment at Bruno, then sighed. “Fine”, he said in defeat.

Garcia finally arrives into the classroom, knowing that she rushed in late to class for the almost millionth time. She was almost out of breath.

Keeping on panting and panting, Garcia said “Excuse me for being late!”. Garcia stood still unlike before where she was bending down to relax herself. “Gee, it’s almost like I keep getting lost in the woods or something…”, Garcia mumbled to herself. Her students simply stared at her blankly. Some seemed annoyed at her, while others just wanted the day to be over already. Both are valid feelings.

Carly cracked the door open while her mother walked her way to the teacher’s desk. She wasn’t as tired as her mother. “Mom, can we arrive early for once?”, Carly nagged. Garcia rolled her eyes, looking as far away from her daughter. It’s as if Garcia has become a teenage daughter to her own daughter. Carly strolled her way to her seat, ignoring her mother.

Garcia cleared her throat after she straightened her papers and got up to the whiteboard, standing straight in front of everyone. Garcia stretched her arms up, then bended it down.

“So, good morning students”, Garcia wished.

“Good morning, Mrs. Garcia”, everyone else wished back.

“I’m very sorry for what sort of fiasco I just caused! I, er, just slipped in late from bed!”, Garcia apologized.

Winnie giggled, then replied. “It’s fine!”, Winnie said.

Garcia stepped towards her desk, took the papers up to review it. Once she plot it back into the table, she inhaled then exhaled yet again. “Well, kids! It’s about time we study about this!”, Garcia declared.

Every student was curious about this. As curious as a cat would be. Sheldon raised his arm impulsively. “Ooh! Ooh! Is it about the Ultrazooms?”, Sheldon eagerly asked. Garcia had a chuckle then a laugh. “No! That lesson will be coming in the future. For now, we’ll study about…”.

Garcia had a pause to dramatically introduce the topic. She had to awkwardly turn on her presentation while waiting. It luckily didn’t take that much time for her to figure things out.

“… Criminal poets!”, Garcia sung in a melody.

Everyone’s jaws dropped. Criminal poets? That’s not what normal students are taught everyday. Open Book School isn’t such a normal school in the first place though. The classes are treated like countries and hangouts are normal. It’s crazy that the students even think of a cat coming in through the school walls as insane.

“Criminal… poets…?”, Alex asked. Bruno leaned next to Alex’s chair since the seats were apart from each other. Bruno sarcastically whispered to Alex, “Gee, glad Vlad isn’t here to see this”. Alex snickered once Bruno twisted back to his seat.

“Don’t worry kids! Criminal poets shouldn’t be impossible, or crazy! It’s odd that you children even think this is crazy”, Garcia stated. “It’s common back in France”, Garcia added with a subtle mumble to herself.

Garcia cleared her throat to get prepared. She even straightened her dress, which was previously ruffled up thanks to rushing in so late.

“So, kids. Criminal poets are like what the tin says: They’re poets that are or have become criminals! It’s the latter most of the time”, Garcia explained as the presentation moved to the definition of criminal poets. “Criminal poets aren’t that

common nowadays—nor are poets in general—but they did exist back in the old days. Much back then that I didn't even exist!", Garcia added. "Poets who have become criminals over time wrote amazing poems, none you would expect from anyone who'd pursuit a life of crime".

"Have any of you heard of John's Sky?", Garcia suddenly asked.

Silence erupted. It looks like poems have really come out of fashion—even in 2012. Garcia sighed, knowing before she even asked the question that nobody would answer it.

"It seems that none of you know. Very well", Garcia shrugged off. She continued off, saying "John's Sky is a famous example of a poem written by a criminal, though a future one. Even now, people still miss it when Frank Bailey, the poet, was in his glory days". "An even more infamous example of a criminal poet is someone who comes from the east. Jiang Yin was his name. He's a well-known poet from China. Unlike Frank, he's a poet who has always been a criminal. Jiang has written all his poems in his prison cell!", Garcia exclaimed at the end. "His poems showcase how a person could be turned into once imprisoned in jail".

Garcia changed the slide to present the next and last criminal. "This one is my favorite example! This poet is Jake West. Jake West is a fellow New Yorker just like us! Well, most of us", Garcia chuckled.

In the mere distance, Connor was squinting his eyes to the picture of Jake. To Connor, the picture seemed oddly familiar. It's as though Connor knows Jake to some extent. He ignored it as maybe the Jake he knows is another one. There are over thousands of Jakes in New York, aren't there?

"Jake is well-known for his poem, "Eggs In The Sky". It's about how he thought stars looked like in his childhood. Jake got to prison for 15 years for carjacking. It's rumored in the Bronx that Jake is a kidnapper too though."

"Nowadays, Jake is free from prison and seemed to have learned from his mistakes. Jake is also related to a radio jack! I forgot the radio jack's name, unfortunately", Garcia explained.

Connor's eyes started to shiver, for reasons that even Casper doesn't know.

The presentation ended after that point. Garcia had a face of disgust once she reached the last slide. “Damn it. I could’ve sworn I made more slides. Oh well”, she moaned to herself.

“Is that it for the lesson?”, Spencer asked, playing with his pencil as he twisted it on his table. Garcia glanced at her students before she closed the presentation. “Oh, no! Definitely not!”, Garcia declined. Everyone in the classroom except for Garcia led out an obviously tired and annoyed sigh together. Some even sounded like they were moaning or groaning.

“At least we’re still not learning about compound words!”, Winnie optimistically chuckled. Roselynn nodded with her usual calm smile in agreement.

Carly blew a part of her hair strand away from her view. She crossed her legs onto the table, letting the chair prop to the table behind her, holding Carly surprisingly well. “You know, mom. I think everyone is getting used to saving the school and all that. That’s why we’ve been, as you call it, “lazy””, Carly explained to her mother.

Garcia, in the distance, twitched her eyes while she was untangling wires that connecting the board to the presentation projector. She sighed, standing up as soon as she stopped setting the projector away.

“Look, kids. I’m… sorry about these lessons. Gregory told me that I have to, or else I and Jeffery would get fired. Don’t get me wrong: I love going on adventures as much as all of you! But… this is my job. I’m hoping you can understand”, Garcia explained softly.

Everyone’s faces went from contempt to content. Seeing a teacher open up is a surprise to bored student’s eyes. This caused the lesson to end as the school bell rings to the break.

Chapter 3
Chaotic

It was Science class, being held in the Science lab for the day. Going to the lab is rare for students. It isn't Adam's fault, though. He mentions multiple times throughout multiple lessons that he is obligated not to take them by the school boards themselves. The school boards themselves being a mystery on their own to the students. It's generally agreed upon by all the students in the school that "the school boards" is made up of the higher-ups, those being Gregory, Kiara and Spin. There isn't such thing as an "agency" or "organization" behind the school since the start. It was just the idea of three college kids who are best friends.

The lesson took as much as time as any lesson, however, it felt quite longer than usual. That's because it did take more time. There was an emergency needed for Adams earlier that day. Mary, his daughter who is a student of Class 3, had an injury during Swimming class earlier that day, so he had to rush in for her.

The students were conducting their work as usual. "Students, make sure that you're wearing those goggles", Adams ordered. Luckily, everyone kept themselves safe and wear those lab goggles.

Not only that, but they kept their surroundings clean and well-organized. Staying safe is important in a school setting after all. One bad move made then thousands of kids would be in danger.

"Why are you asking us that while you already know you know we're wearing them?", Violet asked. Adams cleared his throat. Red blush filtered over his muzzle. "I didn't ask those juniors once… and they did something I can't speak of", Adams answered.

The students were distraught to say the least. Adams was so vague about it, that the minds of the kids would lead them to any conclusion. Adams' face turned to normal as he added, "Also, it seemed like none of you were".

Maverick scoffed in specific. He said, "As if we never wear those goggles!" while he bended his legs over to the table, relaxing the rest of his body on the table. His classmates surrounding him rolled their eyes. They remembered when Winnie

accidently exploded the Science lab. Not only Craig saved Violet, but Maverick didn't even wear his goggles right.

Suddenly, the door opened, revealing someone who has actually been watching the kids banter about outside the door's tiny window. It was Gregory. He was looking daunting, as always. His vest as open at the time, forming a cape-like look flowing behind him. Greg's tie was also partially covering his chin, a part of his mouth too. Before he stepped into the room, he was shrouded in the pitch blackness.

"Good morning, students", Gregory greeted.

"Good morning, Gregory", the students greeted back. They were sitting still in their respective lab seats, forming a U-shaped seat arrangement.

Gregory's black eyes scouted around the room. There weren't any sights for him to rant on luckily. Gregory smiled, though more of a scowl than a smile. Adams was as intimidated as the students were—all the teachers are.

"I've got an important announcement to make", Gregory declared. Gregory's head raised up high, showcasing his power over everyone in the school. Everyone except for Spin. "Now, don't any of you fret. It's actually a fun announcement. Any of you would wish for it in the dreams—now it's finally true", Gregory added.

"Is it a party?", Winnie impulsively asked.

Gregory death stared at Winnie, stunning her into being a statue like her classmates.

"It isn't. For some of you: It's better than a party. It's a field trip!", Gregory announced. Everyone gasped. They were close to celebrating, but couldn't at the heat of the moment of course. Even Adam seemed shocked.

"I know how excited all of you kids are. We rarely have field trips after all. But you all have to equally understand to not take this trip for granted. If everyone behaves well enough in this trip, then us as a school will have a greater chance of having another one this year", Gregory promised.

Everyone nodded, though only thinking about the current trip. Trips almost never get held in the school. There were only two before this point for the eighth-grade batch in their entire eight years of being in the school! The first was in the first grade. The students went to a preschool science museum. The second one was in the

fourth grade. Instead of going to a museum, they went to a local farm that was located in south Bronx. The bus ride took a while since traffic was horrible at the time. It seems like a field trip is held every four years in the school, and the Brooklyn students were lucky to have only waited a year for their field trip—even more so for Bruno who just came in this grade.

Another notable shenanigan occurred in the Bronx trip…

"Don't worry about being with the juniors or the seniors, as this trip is only held for members of grade eight… unlike the last trip…", Gregory added. It's a relief for everyone. In the field trip, some juniors wouldn't stop gushing about how cool the carrots or corns are and the seniors won't stop throwing soil or tomatoes at the students. Luckily, there aren't any more of that any longer.

"Where are we going?", Adams politely asked. Gregory cleared his throat, stating "Good question". "We're going to the New York Radio Station", he answered. Connor had starry eyes and gasped, while everyone else were… underwhelmed to say the least. "Oh, and we're going tomorrow", Gregory suddenly added.

Everyone gasped the same way as Connor did after that, except upset instead of overjoyed. "Tomorrow!? You could've told us this sometime last week!", Sheldon yelled. Gregory shrugged, strangely unprofessionally. "Well, just get ready. Besides, we're going to a radio station. It's not like we're going to someplace dirty or… erk... boring", Gregory suggested and assured. He walked out of the door, leaving without a farewell, just noting them "And don't forget to inform your parents about this and sign their consent signature in a piece of paper. Any paper".

Everyone was left dry right afterward. "Ugh! That stupid headteacher ugh!", Sheldon nagged and nagged. Everyone surrounding him rolled their eyes together. "Well, at least we're not going to a water park or pool—or else I won't go!", Bruno chuckled. Alex thought more thoroughly about this more than everyone else. "How unprepared was Mr. Gregory if he didn't even have any of his own consent forum to distribute to us?", Alex asked. Bruno shrugged. Adam hit a ruler onto the desk. "Ahem. Can everyone please continue the lesson?", Adams politely asked. Everyone nodded and continued to do so.

After the lesson was the sparring class, which everyone was waiting up for the entire day. It was just like the first day of school.

"Ok Rosie, show me what you're made of!", Sheldon exclaimed. Roselynn grinned with her usual laxed eyelids. "I should be the one saying that", she replied. Sheldon was shell shocked by that for a second or so. Roselynn isn't usually a snarky girl, so it's to be expected that any of her classmates are unexpected by her sudden change of attitude.

Bruce was standing between the two, though stood behind to let them fight.

"Fight!", Bruce declared, clear spit coming out of his mouth once he blew his red and wide whistle. His hands once down now lifted up to signify the beginning of the sparring match.

Roselynn rushed towards Sheldon before he could even make a decision for himself. She wasn't rushing like a ruffian either. She was running like an elegant lady in perfume advertisements or ballets. It impressed everyone, even Sheldon. It let Roselynn make the first move.

Sheldon was easily brought down. "Well, those looks don't matter", Sheldon denied to himself as he got himself up. Sheldon clenched his fists and ran towards Roselynn in the more tradition manner. Roselynn dodged the bullet though. Sheldon and his fists are no match for Roselynn's cunning movements.

Sheldon stood up. Cracked up his knuckles, he was truly ready for the fight he first thought he was going to win. It seems like it wasn't going to as easy as he thought so.

While Sheldon continued to fight Roselynn with his best efforts, all of their classmates curiously watched in the background. Never have the students been this invested in the matches. Majority of the time, they'd mess and dance around the gym until it's their turn to fight for the day, or if they aren't called, just continue "doing stuff" as they'd say. That day was different.

Roselynn rarely (if not never) fights. She is seen as a pacific by her peers, with her only offensive is her defense. That type of strategy is oddly effective, especially against dominantly physical fighters like Sheldon or Riley.

Bruce was just as impressed as his students. It was jaw-dropping for him—to say the least. “I’d say: Roselynn sure is a clever cat here”, Alex stated. Bruno turned his head to Alex, shrouded in confusion by Alex’s phrase. “Roselynn isn’t a cat?”, Bruno questioned.

Alex chuckled, then fizzled up Bruno’s hair with his hands like an older brother would. “Roselynn is sharp and clever! I’m surprised you don’t even know that phrase considering the fact that you’re writing a book”, Alex corrected. Bruno’s eyelids went downwards while hearing that and fixing his hair back to the way it was. “Look, I stopped writing that book since October. I just didn’t want to deal with school and writing a lot of books at the same time”, Bruno replied. Alex smiled, not taking things too seriously. He and Bruno continued to watch the fascinating match.

Roselynn was still beating Sheldon to the punch, making she’d even blow a K.O if she’s lucky enough.

Defeating the impossible, Roselynn actually won. Sheldon’s face was full of bruises and red spots. Luckily, none of his spots meant much. They simply meant that Sheldon needs some—or a lot of—bandages.

“Roselynn wins!”, Jackie announced. Nobody said anything. They were speechless.

“Wow, Rose. Lucky you”, Sheldon congratulated, obviously faking a smile though. Roselynn could tell herself how wrong that face of his was. “Sheldon, just admit it. You’re not happy being defeated”, Roselynn told him while everyone was walking away, preparing and choosing their own battles… well, choosing the best they can. A battle is randomized and chosen by the teachers anyhow.

“Rose, you already know I hate losing!”, Sheldon told Roselynn. Roselynn patted Sheldon on the back, almost making him spit. “I know you do!”, Roselynn told. Sheldon raised his eyebrows. “Since when are you this good at sparring anyways?”, Sheldon asked, seemingly suspicious of Roselynn’s sudden greatness at this useful but harsh skill.

Roselynn backed away from Sheldon, soon replying “Sometimes, a battle isn’t only physical, but mental as well”. “You saw how lovely and delicate I was. That won’t win you a war, but it sure will win you against someone shrunken as much as you”. She turned her back on Sheldon, like a mysterious maiden.

Sheldon fizzled in anger, still not understanding Roselynn's little language. "What the heck do you mean?", Sheldon asked.

Roselyn smiled, turned her back at Sheldon and approached him. Her arms behind her, in the chilling air, she asked him "Shall I teach you?".

Sheldon looked around for other students, to only find out that the others have gone off to the locker rooms. The lesson was close to ending, yet it felt like it's only been 10 minutes since it started. In the dead silence, Sheldon glanced back at Roselynn's eyes brimming with light. "Sure", he answered.

Sheldon and Roselynn walked back to the locker rooms along with the other students.

At the end of the day, the sun was sleeping down. Orange flooded the skies. The clouds were darker than the sky, yet felt so transparent. Amidst the elegance that the atmosphere is embracing, the students of Open Book School got their way back home, or the hangout if they felt like it. Most parents allowed those kids into the hangout. It is a part of the agreement between Craig and his peers after all.

Unlike most kids, Connor and Casper don't usually go to the hangout. The only times they have ever been there is during important events or in the opening of the hangout. Rarely they've ever come just for the sakes of it.

This is not because their parents are overprotective—far from it—Connor and Casper simply didn't want to go.

During their way back to their homes, Connor and Casper were having a talk about a specific topic. It was surprising to anyone who knew them. Despite being the best of friends, the two don't talk often outside of school.

The topic in question is about a recent announcement made. "I can't even describe how excited I am!", Connor exclaimed. Casper chuckled, then sneezed. "I can tell. You almost never talk like this Connor. Why are you so excited anyways?", he asked. Somehow, Casper doesn't even know what was going through Connor's mind during the entire day.

“I’m a fan of the radio. Specifically, Breakfast with the RJs! It’s the morning block that runs from 7AM to 10. I listen to it every morning before and even while going to school!”, Connor explained.

“That show? I listen to it too. I never really pay attention to it much though. I must admit: New York really has a better radio station than the Greenland one! That one only plays music about how cold the island is”, Casper replied. Connor chuckled, not believing the last sentence.

Connor remembered a question he always wanted to ask Casper but never could. It’s mostly because he doesn’t even know if Casper knows about the radio. “Do you know the names of the radio jacks?”, Connor asked. Casper sneezed, later answering “Uh. Ren… Diana… Sam?”, with a questionable tone.

Connor nodded happily.

“Correct, correct! Well, Sam has been gone from the radio since last week—but you’re right!”, Connor replied.

Casper raised his eyebrow, obviously suspicious of that. “Sam disappeared?”, Casper asked. Connor nodded, his smile turning into a depressing frown. Sighing, he answered “Yeah. Now he’s replaced by Ren’s cousin, Jake. Nobody really knew what happened to Sam and a search for him is still going on right now”.

“Jake?”, Casper asked. Casper sensed something is going on. The name “Jake” rang a bell for him because of the English lesson that occurred in the morning. Connor nodded. “I know what you’re thinking: But it’s probably another Jake West”, Connor replied.

Connor noticed his house in the distance. He left without saying goodbye, leaving Casper silently hanging in the background, pondering about this.

Chapter 4
Into The Station

The following day, it was the day of the field trip. Well, more of so a nothing trip since it wasn't to a theme park. Either way, the students got out of school for once. Free from all the insanity that the school infamously stirs up. Through the windy air were the students lining up to the bus. Prepared to get their way to a radio station, it was a miracle that anyone could even lift their own hefty bags. What they even brought is anyone's guess.

All four classes formed a formerly straight, but now zig-zag like line. It wasn't even a line at that point! The line throughout the entire grade extended across the bus to the outside hall. With 82 students going to multiple buses, there was no wonder why things were the way they were.

Out of any class, the surprisingly most patient ones were of Class 2. The other classes were impatient or going already. Class 1 was the latter, all going into the class's bus. Of course, there was a worked-up student among the 24 bunch. That one being Sheldon, infamous for being impatient and impulsive.

"Ugh! When will you go already?!", he grumbled up. It was safe to say that he was an ugly old grumpy grandpa that morning.

The remaining Class 1 students in front of the class 2 line turned back curiously, perhaps even irritated of his yelling. One talked. "Gee, just wait. There'll only be a few of us", they said. It was a student called Harley. Harvey, who was in front of him, nodded in agreement. Harvey isn't usually the impatient type, so it wasn't a surprise that he did agree with his fellow Class 1 student.

Sheldon's head pounded in anger. Riley massaged Sheldon's shoulders in order to free his mind of the rage. Unfortunately, that didn't work.

Sheldon slapped Riley's palms off of his shoulder. He turned his body back to stare at Riley's calm eyes. Meanwhile, Spencer's face suggested that he's experiencing a form of regret of even being seat partners with Sheldon. He had to be stuck with Sheldon for this field trip now thanks to Mrs. Garcia grouping him with Sheldon for the rest of it.

"Riley, why were you doing that?", Sheldon asked.

Riley raised his arms up high, like a criminal getting caught by the police. “I was just trying to comfort you”, he said while he set his arms downwards.

Finally, all the Class 1 students left off. However, it wasn’t goodbye for them. To taunt their rival Class 2, some students went to the bus windows and made sneering faces at them. One student was even holding a sign that says, *“We’re the first ones, you’re not!*”. Another sign even read, *“See you later, suckers!”*.

Obviously, the Class 2 members were not made happy by this. As a matter of fact, their smiles flipped upside down.

“There’s one thing I do know… AND IT’S THAT I DON’T’ LIKE THEM!”, surprisingly Sid yelled. His eyes squinted in anger at the Class 1 students. It almost formed a glare. “Agreed”, Craig replied.

The other classes were laughing their heads off.

Garcia came just in time to quiet everyone down. “Quiet down students, quiet down!”, she requested while hustling her way down to her students.

Once she reached them, everyone gave her a nearly death stare. This is perhaps a payback for all the times she gave them one. She flinched, of course. “Sorry! I just got lost”, Garcia apologized.

The students finally got into the bus. One by one. It started with Carly, then to the end with Paul. He didn’t mind being last, actually. He didn’t want to go at first, but decided to because his friends are.

The bus was different from the first Class 1 one. Actually, all the main four buses are. The first one is blue, the second is black and gray, the third is green and purple and the fourth is red, or almost velvet-colored. The third seems to be the smallest of them all, while the fourth is the largest for an apparent reason.

Once everyone in Class 2 entered, they took their places like they did back in class. The exact same seat positions. Of course, some switches were made between who was left and who was right.

The interior was as interesting as the exterior. The main color was almost a dark gray metal with alternating square and triangle designs on the floor. The seats

were dark red with light red or pink highlights in the middle of the seat frame. The windows were covered in curtains just in case the sun bothers anyone. In the tail of the bus, there are three seats that open out, covering the entire end. A window is made behind it. All windows are fairly transparent with some dirt and scrapes.

Exhausted from waiting in the sunlight, the students got refreshed by the installed fans and a simple sip of water from their fancy bottles.

The bus ride was almost fantastic. Some would even say extraordinary. The views away from the sunshine was a simple way of the city. While it may impress anyone who hasn't been to New York, it won't to anyone who lives there, won't it? Getting across the bustling city to a specific part of it was hard work from the driver's end, but he could still get through it.

During it, when they reached the main road of Times Square, Garcia cheered from the tail of the bus, "Aren't you liking this already?!". With her enthusiasm follows… nothing from the students. She sat with the awkwardness, then walked away from it after having had enough of it.

Across her were Bruno and Alex. Bruno stared at the now-dim lights of Times Square. The advertisements boomed into Bruno's eyes, but not exploding him enough. Alex was reading a book before he decided to initiate a conversation with him after noticing how silent Bruno has strangely gotten since the day started.

"Bruno? What's bothering you, hm?", Alex asked. He dropped his book down into his bag which seemed to be the lightest out of all.

Bruno noticed by looking at the reflection in front of him. He turned back to spot Alex. His face was of concern. Feeling awkward, Bruno shot his eye down, hesitantly going back to Alex's face. "Nothing is", he answered almost silently.

"I don't know", Alex responded.

Bruno chuckled. "You're just being silly!", he assured. It was clear that something is.

"Just spit it out. I know you", Alex continued, ignoring what Bruno just said.

Bruno's face transformed to anger. He finally gave in and admitted, "Fine. There is". "Look, I've just been thinking about stuff that's been going on lately", he

explained. “What things?”, Alex asked in response. Bruno deterred his face away from Alex, instead moving his eyes to the city.

“I just… It’s just about Team Toxic”, Bruno further explained.

Alex’s eyes went from concern to one of amusement. “I tried warning you, Bruno. Now you face the consequences”, Alex told.

Bruno sighed, now laying his head on the window. His breath dispersed into the air, condensing into the glass. “I know… I just really want to be with them. And it’s not like they hate me or I hate them, it’s that I don’t know how to fit in with them!”, he continued, turning his body back to look at Alex.

Vlad soon gave in his two cents to Bruno’s worries. Willing to assure him, he said across the duo’s seat, “It’s fine if you don’t fit in—whatever that means! You just need to be yourself, let loose and go crazy!”. “That’s what the team really is about—not the weird rumor nonsense everyone tells you about!”, Vlad added.

Bruno warmly smiled at him. Though he didn’t say anything, it was clear that he appreciated Vlad’s kind words. Meanwhile, Alex didn’t believe one bit of anything Vlad said. All he heard were sweet lies to lure his best friend in. That’s how it sounded like to him. However, since he wants to make Bruno happy, he decided to keep his mouth shut.

“Thanks, Vlad”, Bruno smiled.

“It was nothing”, Vlad responded.

Oddly enough, nothing else came out of it. Bruno still looked through the window as if he’s the protagonist of a movie. Alex continued to read his book, and Vlad made one of his many attempts at talking to Paul, but failed like always.

Finally, they arrived to the station. The long-awaited legendary station. Indeed, those words were not of false rumors. The building was grand. Huge. Maybe even larger than the school. This is because the building is shared between three studios, one for the radio and the other two for movies and shows that are usually locally made.

When the Class 2 stepped their feet out of the bus, they felt like they stepped right onto the moon… well… not entirely. It was for Connor, but as for other students, they saw the studio as a simple radio station. Either way, they marched in like a line.

Bruno in specific stopped out of everyone as he was pulled by someone. Because of being pulled in so harshly and quickly, he turned into a dizzy mess. His eyes formed a double-like effect. He felt like he got out of a teacup ride. Who pulled him was a mystery until he got back to normal.

Right in front of him, he saw a black-haired boy with purple streaks and a basic black and purple clothing. The other side was a girl with brown hair and pink streaks. She wore a kimono.

Still confused, he asked "What… Where am I?".

After the boy waved his hand in front of Bruno's eye, Bruno got to see that it's… Aster and Blossom! "Oh, you guys!", he exclaimed. His eyes roamed around, searching for their classmates. They weren't around anywhere. As a matter of fact, they were away in the two other buses, forming lines of their own like Class 2 did.

"What are you doing here? Aren't you supposed to be going with your classes?", Bruno asked.

"Well, we asked if we could hang out with our friends…", Aster paused, waiting for a cue for Blossom to continue by saying "… And they were fine with it!". She followed it with a slight chuckle.

Bruno was obviously shocked. Staring at the two won't really do wonders for him though, so he continues his ways.

"That's great, now I have to go with my classmates. I know you might need me for whatever reason but—". Bruno got stopped during a turn to move to his classmates' line. A hand hit his shoulder. It was Aster's. "No! We're fine if you're going if Vlad is here", Aster said.

Bruno raised his eyebrows, curious and confused at the same time. "Vlad? Vlad literally was behind me", Bruno replied. Aster and Blossom glances at each other. Blossom answered back with, "We know, but we also know that he's sort of busy with your classmates".

[redacted] "I think he'd prefer to be with you guys better, just saying", Bruno suggested. Blossom nodded with a smile, which turned into a frown immediately after. "Yeah, but I think he needs his own friends too", Blossom said.

Bruno shook his head. [redacted] confusion invaded his brain. “Ok, so am I supposed to be with you now, or…?”, he asked.

Aster sighed and facepalmed. Forcefully, he pushed Bruno back to the now-gone Class 2 line. “Just go. Me and Blossom can go back to our classes. Next time we come to you, stay with us though”, Aster ordered. Bruno stared at the two as they head back to their respective classes’ lines.

“That was weird”, Bruno said to himself. Shrugging to himself, he soon followed his classmates to the inside of the station.

Inside the station was an enormous lobby. There were already Class 1 students fiddling around and playing with some of the laptops there. Apparently, they were waiting for the other classes to catch up to them. Bruno was impressed. So were his classmates.

The lobby has a gray color scheme, with some black and white sprinkled in across the room. Some furniture were brown and wooden, while others were light grey and metal. Generally, the floor was of a blue and white textile. Most would describe the lobby as one of a hotel, except without the fancy hanging chandeliers.

The seats were bean bags, while the desk ones were normal chairs. The laptops were lined up in five rows in a simple single line. They were placed beside the clear window. In the holidays, lights would be hung up.

“Did we step into a hotel or what?”, Maverick joked. Mandy snickered in front of him. Mrs. Garcia rolled her eyes with a slight smile in the middle of her face. She marched to the front of the line.

“Students!”, she called out to everyone’s attention. It succeeded as everyone turned their once aroused heads to their teacher. “Don’t get too hasty during the trip, ok? I can’t bare to see any payments made in my part!”, she advised.

One student raised their hand—Spencer. He was allowed to ask, “What do you mean by that, miss?”. “Indeed! It’s not like we’ll break anything too exquisite, eh?!”, Bella added.

Mrs. Garcia’s eyes turned to behind her, pointing at a broken vase. That occurred after a Class 1 student accidently slipped on the floor and landed on the

vase, breaking the fragile glass that held the now-gone Bonsai tree. As expected, they had to pay for the damages; payment for damages was mentioned in the field trip consent slip after all.

The students noticed what happened, though not knowing of what it used to be, they knew exactly what Mrs. Garcia meant after refreshing their minds on what the slip said. “Ohhhh”, they collectively said. “But don’t worry! Like Bella said, I’m not expecting anyone to break anything. The broken vase was caused by a slip-up after all”, Mrs. Garcia assured. While she was trusting of the students, she was also quite uncertain if anything would actually happen considering her class’s infamous track record of getting into some trouble—dangerous ones.

“Anyhow, follow me! Ignore those other students”, Mrs. Garcia ordered. She stared at Mrs. Delilah, who was simply just playing ping pong on the radio’s laptop. Clearly, she was not giving any hoots about her students who were practically going to be in huge debt after this trip considering what they’ve done and what they’re doing. “… They’re under Mrs. Delilah’s care…”, Mrs. Garcia added while slowly turning her daunted head back to her students.

They somehow didn’t bat an eye to their teacher and carried on with their walking—or following—of their teacher.

They walked through an extremely long hall that led to the elevator to the second floor. The entire hall were doors leading to office rooms for the station. It’s mainly for the radio, but it can also be purposed for the studio side of the station.

“Hey, what about the other other students?”, Vlad suddenly asked.

“The **other** other students? Do you mean Class 3 and 4?”, Mrs. Garcia stopped and asked, therefore stopping everyone else behind her.

Vlad nodded. Mrs. Garcia thought about it for a thorough moment. She looked behind the line just to find no one behind them. Not even the Class 1 students who were supposed to leave by now, or even before them. Nonetheless, Mrs. Garcia came to a certain conclusion.

Mrs. Garcia stammered, then concluded with “They’re going to come… **eventually**”.

“Miss, why are ya so scared? Is it ‘bout nuthin’ or is it ‘bout sumthin’?”, Winnie asked out of the blue, similarly to Vlad.

“No, no, no1”, Mrs. Garcia denied with her hands gesturing so. She turned back to say, “I’m just thinking about Mr. Gregory”.

Carly rolled her eyes. “Come on, mom. I know he’s, like, your boss but that’s no excuse to be so scared”, she said with some sass in. Mrs. Garcia facepalmed. Without facing her daughter, she replied with “That’s the point: He’s my boss… sort of”. “Let’s just continue”, Mrs. Garcia commanded immediately.

They did so.

They finally reached the second floor—and finally heard some other, more unfamiliar footsteps. Indeed, the other classes have arrived. The Class 2 members have ignored them at this point however.

In front of them was the relaxation spot for radio jacks. That is also where they keep their bags and other needed items, since they’re not allowed to carry their bags into the recording rooms. Even the studio has that rule. While it is currently unknown why this rule is in place, it’s generally agreed that it’s simply because someone could easily hold something dangerous in the bag or something that’d distract them and their partner if they have one. Also, having bags in a recording room just doesn’t look good in general, similar to a classroom having bags.

The students look forward just to find that no-one was inside a recording room that was in the following hall. They were ordered to turn back to look at Mrs. Garcia instead by her. “Students, stop looking there”, she said.

They approached her, breaking the line and forming a crowd. “Here is the mess hall for the radio jacks! Or just the people working here”, she explained. “They usually keep their bags inside the lockers though”, she added afterward.

“Can we go now?”, Casper asked. Connor nodded diligently in the middle of the large dark room only lit by fluorescent lights. “I agree! I didn’t come here to look at lockers, I’m here to look at the people here!”, he exclaimed madly.

Connor didn’t seem to be holding back for this trip—probably because he’s going to finally meet the people he always wanted to: The Radio Jacks! Specifically, the Three Musketeers, as fans would affectionately call them. The three are known

to wake people up well in the morning due to their energy and witty humor. Plus, they have good dynamics and would allow people to join in the fun by contacting them through the station's phone line.

Connor's sudden burst of energy caught everyone off guard. He isn't usually like this. As a matter of fact, he's seen as the quiet kid, even quieter than Casper. A quiet kid is expected to be, well, quiet. Connor is an exceptional in this one day.

"Wow, Connor! What's going on with you?", Mrs. Garcia curiously asked.

"Excuse m-me! I'm just too excited!", Connor answered.

"To meet the radio jacks? Well, I sure am too!", Mrs. Garcia responded back. Her head later roamed around to look for someone. It seemed like nothing.

"What'cha looking for, teach?", Renard asked with his unintentional attitude.

"I'm looking for someone who was supposed to be coming earlier! She's either late or just not coming. Doubt the latter's true though!", Mrs. Garcia explained with her anxiety invading her brain's space.

Soon after Mrs. Garcia said that, a lady came right from the dark hall.

"You're right!", she corrected.

The lady was of tan skin. She had fair-brown eyes. Short-bun hair, with some strands jutting out. Her clothes were similar to those of the radio jacks—a white and light gray outfit with a black jacket. Her neck held a camera with a necklace-like wire holding onto it. It's used to capture moments in the station, or moments for those who visit it, like the school that day.

Garcia gasped, while the other students were frozen. "You must be Amanda, right!", Garcia made sure of. The lady, named Amanda, nodded along. "It's true, but you didn't need to start the introduction!", she said with enthusiasm plastered over her face.

Amanda stood straight in front of all of Class 2. Her legs let her stay high above the others—she is tall and slim after all. She looked like a giant to everyone, excluding Garcia.

“Good morning, students! My name is Amanda, as you might just have heard from your teacher”, Amanda introduced. Her eyes later scouted across the room to find a student to talk to. No opportunities were found, however. “I was going to let you all introduce yourselves to me, but, well, we would be done by the night then!”, Amanda laughed. She turned back to face the hall in front of her. “Anyways, let’s get this tour going! I already got late after all”, Amanda said. She walked forward, with the others gazing at each other, finally following her after. They passed through windows and windows of microphones on a stand. So many rooms. So many things could be recorded here. No wonder why other cities in the state wanted a radio station like that—though they would definitely want anything from New York City—excluding Buffalo if you want to.

Somehow, the students felt an air of discomfort alongside the pleasant breeze the air conditioner brings to them. Perhaps because the rooms are so silent. Empty. Quite dark and gloomy too, albeit most of the station is dimly lit in general. The studio is most probably the same case. It’s odd since most radio jacks would’ve been scheduled to come by now. It was 10 AM after all—when the morning show ends.

That didn’t matter much to the school, as they were mainly looking for Ren, Diana and formerly Sam before he disappeared. He was the morning news reader, actually. He happened to have joined into the show via a happy accident done by Ren one morning.

“So, Amanda, would you mind explaining the ins-and-outs of this station?”, Garcia politely asked. Amanda gladly nodded. She stopped in front of the second-to-last room on the right. “Sure will! Or, well, I was just about to, actually”, Amanda replied.

Amanda looked behind her to check if it’s the write room. A sign beside the door wrote “16” on it. It was silver-colored, but not actually the silver material. Meanwhile, the door behind Amanda was textured as wooden and deep, dark brown. “This here is Room 16, or the special room!”, Amanda introduced. Everyone let out their ooh’s and ahh’s at it, despite not even knowing what made it so special in the first place. Thankfully, someone did ask “Why is that?”, Winnie asked with her innocent smile and googly-like eyes.

Connor scoffed in the background, later in the foreground since he was one student behind Winnie. “It should be obvious: It’s the rooms for special occasions

and holidays!", Connor answered. Winnie stared at Connor, maybe even with a thorough or "are you crazy?" look in her face. Casper, behind Connor, sniffed up his mucus amidst the awkward silence. Amanda broke it thankfully. "Good job, child!", Amanda congratulated, clapping her two hands.

"Yup! He's right!"

"This room is used during holiday broadcasts. I'm not sure why, but I think it has to do with decorations or something. Boss keeps it a secret from everyone, including tourguides like me!", Amanda explained deeply.

"Sometimes, meetings are held here", she added on.

The students didn't say or even do much during the explanation. They were simply standing still. One raised their hand after she stopped though.

"Miss Amanda", Craig called. Amanda pointed at Craig, giving a hint that he can indeed speak out. In one breath, Craig asked, "What's exactly the meaning of this… field trip?".

Amanda blinked. She wasn't expecting that kind of question, but at the same time, **someone** had to ask that, didn't they? "Good question!", she white-lied. "Well, a radio may seem useless, but it actually is in reality! It can be used for international and domestic use. It can connect everyone, you see!", she explained the best she could. She added with, "Learning about it will enhance your understanding of these stations. It's not like your school will, right?". The students nodded to that rhetorical question, along with Craig among them. "Good point; thank you miss", Craig thanked. Amanda sighed, proud that she's free from an awkward explanation. She hoped that there won't be another at least anytime soon.

They continued their way upstairs. No elevators stopped them, thankfully. If one was there, then they'd take ages just to reach another floor. Upon marching up, everyone arrived to the third floor, where the morning show is held. This excited Connor, while everyone else was unaware before Amanda told them so.

"Students! This is **the** floor! For the morning show!".

The students realized, while Connor squealed in excitement. That froze everyone. "… Are you ok?", Sarah asked with her scruffy voice. Connor blinked and blankly stared at everyone. He smiled and nodded. Amanda smiled back.

Chapter 5

The Radio Jacks

Amanda guided the students and Mrs. Garcia to the morning show room. They came in the right time too since they were just about done with it. “Over here!”, Amanda called to the more spaced-out students. Everyone came, with Connor being the most ecstatic out of anyone—even among the other classes. Ren and Diana were both wishing everyone goodbye and played their last song for the day. It was an 80s song, strangely enough. While it’s not uncommon hearing one in 2012, it certainly is odd for a radio channel known for playing “recent hits”.

Anyhow, Ren and Diana (and Jake) saw the others standing in front of the door together as soon as they turned off their microphones. “Oh! Hey kiddos!”, Ren informally greeted. Mrs. Garcia peaked around. She spotted some papers improperly pinned on a blackboard—very unlike her classroom. Also seen were the microphone stands. It stood thin, tall and leaned its main microphone down.

Mrs. Garcia turned her weirded out eyes at Ren and Diana. “Hi. Ren and Diana, right?”, Mrs. Garcia asked. The two nodded, though Jake was different. His arms folded in a tempered tone. His expression even suggests so. “Don’t forget about me: Jake”, he said. Connor whispered into Mrs. Garcia’s fairly small ears with his equally small mouth, “He’s the replacement for news reader Sam!”. Mrs. Garcia knew something was left to be desired when one of the radio jacks have quite literally gone missing.

“So, you’re the school kids who are supposed to come, right? Or are they high schoolers?”, Diana asked with confused eyes.

Ren snickered at her, smacking her shoulder in a friendly manner. “They’re high schoolers, Diana!”, Ren joked. Diana laughed along. The students watched in confusion while Connor watched along with entertained eyes. “This is amazing!”, he squealed in excitement. Everyone grew confused of Connor’s oddly energetic state. He’s usually quiet, why is it only now that he’s so hyper?

“Hah! I see someone gets our groove, Diana!”, Ren exclaimed. Diana nodded quickly, after replying with, “That’s right!”. “What’s your name?”, she followed up asking.

As soon as he heard those words, he zipped his mouth. No words splashed around the room any longer. Just a frozen Connor. Casper tapped Connor on the shoulder for a second, waiting for a response just like everyone else. “C-Connor?”, he stuttered.

“Is he shy, or what?”, Ren asked.

Everyone shrugged. Nobody even knew at this point.

“Usually, he is. It’s only now that he’s acting out”, Max explained. Diana put her hand beside her mouth in utter concern for the kid, while Ren simply gave a concerned and confused look at the same time. “Oh, ok”, Diana responded awkwardly.

“Anyways!”, Ren cleared his throat. “Welcome to New York Radio!”.

“Ren—Mr. Ren!—I already introduced them to everything!”, Amanda explained. Ren, who wasn’t really ever a good listener, suddenly did. His attentive side might’ve activated because he needs to impress himself and his whole morning show in front of middle school kids. While their opinions may not mean much to them—or any adult for that matter—it does to the school boards and the higher-ups in the radio company.

“Oh, sure Amanda. You can go now”, Ren blissfully ordered Amanda. His tone gave a sense of laziness, maybe even the opposite of his attention striking up earlier. That didn’t matter to Amanda as she continued to walk out the room, without even spitting out any words before.

“Now what should we do…?”, Ren asked, supposedly to himself or even Diana who was standing next to him. He grunted out of the heat produced by the number of people in the tiny room, which is a lot. After stretching out and moaning a lot, Ren followed up his suggestion with, “How about we get to another room?”. The students looked at each and agreed, their previous frowns now transformed into fixed smiles.

“Before we go, form the line!”, Mrs. Garcia sung. The students did so. “So, where are we going?”, Winnie asked. Ren chuckled. “Anywhere!”, he answered.

“A-Anywhere?!”, everyone exclaimed, even Mrs. Garcia and Diana. “Ren, I know you’re ridiculous… BUT THIS IS RIDICULOUS!”, Diana yelled in a comedic matter. She was yelling at a distance too, since she was behind the line while Ren was right in the front.

Ren scoffed it off. “Come on, Di, give them a little break. They’ve taken an hour out of their time coming here! I think it’d be great to just set them free for a bit”, Ren reasoned. Diana looked at the kids excited to just tear the entire building apart. She sighed and agreed by nodding, not saying a word. “Yay!”, everyone cheered, including Ren. The kids ran off to do things, except for Connor and Bruno. The latter approached Garcia.

“Teacher”, Bruno called. Garcia noticed, soon looking down to see him. “What is it?”, she questioned. Bruno glanced at the distance to see Vlad running off to Team Toxic. “May I go and see my friends from the other classes?”, he asked. Garcia’s face turned from sweet to sour upon him saying that. She reluctantly sighed and said, “Fine. Don’t take over the world or anything though”. Bruno cheered in excitement as he ran to the team.

Meanwhile, Connor simply stared at Ren and Diana. That made them uncomfortable, like anyone would be in their position. They stared at Connor’s light brown eyes. His eyes shined like a shimmering diamond. His mouth pouting while somehow smiling at the same time. Ren and Diana stared at opposite directions before facing back at the boy.

“What do you want?”, Diana asked.

“Yeah, aren’t you supposed to be with your friends?”, Ren followed up with

“I want to talk to you two first! I’m such a big fan, that’s why I’m so excited yet so anxious at the same time. It’s like meeting someone you’d always want to meet but never had the chance to but now you have and you just want to explode in excitement!”, Connor frantically spoke. He’d even stutter in some words.

The radio jacks were left speechless. If Sam was there, he’d say something to enlighten the kid. Sadly, the remaining two members… weren’t the best with kids to say the least. In the background, Garcia was watching in silence.

“Well, that’s nice”, Ren said. “Hey! If you want to talk to us, you can stay in the studio! We might’ve finished the show but we can stay there!”, Diana suggested.

Connor's eyes went to a solar flare of feeling overjoyed. "Sure!", he screamed. The three walked inside the studio, leaving everyone dead without any words left to say. They continued messing around with the station assets.

Bruno finally reached where Team Toxic were, which was in one of the many vacant rooms. The members were messing around with the microphones and strangely sturdy equipment. Before anyone could make any joke announcements with one of the microphones, Bruno interrupted everything with "Hey guys! What's going on here?".

"Hey Bruno! We're just playing with stuff here", Vlad answered. Bruno stared at Vlad, maybe even past him at the others. "So this is where you've been?", he asked. Vlad shrugged with no care or concern in the world for anything… except maybe his friends. "Where else?", he replied.

"Glad you came. I and Bloss need you", Aster said while standing up from the pitch black chair supported by iron. He pulled Blossom up from her seat, which was the opposite of his. "We do?", she asked. Aster facepalmed. "Did you seriously forget?", he asked while doing so. Sweat dripped down from his black, jagged hair. Blossom lit up. "Oh I know now!", Blossom affirmed to herself. She chuckled in awkwardness.

Ivon smiled, crossing his arms. Bruno simply stared while everyone didn't mind the two since they know exactly what they're talking about. "It's a problem only the emotional support can solve", Ivon hinted. Bruno didn't take it though. He thought his duties were only secluded to the team, not the entire school… unless there are unknown or pseudo-members?

"Follow us", Aster ordered Bruno. [redacted]

Bruno followed them so. They took him out of the vacant room and through the seemingly long halls. Many more rooms. So many rooms that most are believed to will never be used. Very unlike school where every single room is used, even the unused ones.

However, Bruno felt like he was walking through familiar halls. Familiar walls. Full of locked lockers, full of doors and papers playing as signs to a room. Signs that label between Classes 1-4. He felt like he saw some student's faces too. He was always at the glass actually. Simply observing through the glass.

They finally reached the relaxation or locker area. An entire war broke out between Class 3 and 4. Hisses and fits are the main sights to see over there. From the pigtail girls to the quiet kids, everyone was fighting over… something.

"What's going on here?", Bruno asked. "A fight, what else?", Aster replied with snark. Bruno turned himself down for a moment after Aster said that. "You know, I and Aster are lucky we were even allowed to go somewhere together! But that is always the case, so I don't really know what I'm talking about at this point", Blossom quickly spoke.

"Really? Well, what can I really do here? I'm not the class president or anything. Who is anyways?", Bruno asked. Aster's eyes searched for the leaders amongst the crowded riot, while Blossom stood silently. A vacant face took over her previous one. Aster finally found the boy who leads him—and who he despises at the same time.

"That guy is my president: Michael Walls", Aster answered as he pointed at Michael. Michael had short, perfectly-cut brown hair. He wore a fancy coat with equally fancy shoes.

That name rang a bell to Bruno. "The writer of that assignment book, right?", Bruno asked. "Correct!", Aster replied. He sighed deeply afterward, planting his palm on his forehead soon after. "While he is my president and leader of all the classes… he's so pretentious". "He thinks he knows everything in the world!", Aster complained. Blossom giggled and even snorted in laughter during Aster's rant.

"Hey, Blossom, how about yours?", Bruno asked. Blossom lit up with a bright smile. She instantly pointed at her leader: Peppermint Puddle. She was much quicker than Aster because everyone in her class looks unique from one another. "That girl! The one with the long hair", Blossom pointed out.

Indeed, Peppermint had long pigtails that extended so far that it could reach to the ground whenever it could. She had equally huge pink bowties to match her hair, tying it all together. Her wardrobe, meanwhile, is a simple but delicate frilly

pink dress with bows all around her. Her appearance is the norm of the cutesy or handsome Class 3 members though. Blossom really is the only one who doesn't fit in, but even then, her kimono dress is charming to many, including her purple hoodie-wearing friend beside her.

Bruno tried to hold back a snicker. Blossom noticed though, despite Bruno trying his best to hold back. "What's so funny?", Blossom asked. Bruno stood still, keeping himself finally silent. "Nothing", he lied. Blossom rolled her eyes. "Well, I have to admit: I'm nothing compared to her. Seriously, she looks a-mazing!", Blossom off-handedly complimented. "I'm really nothing…", Blossom sighed.

Aster noticed how Blossom turned down. Before he was going to say anything, Bruno started talking. "I think I've got an idea", Bruno declared. "Good! What is it?", Blossom eagerly asked. Aster sighed, knowing he hasn't got much of a chance to impress Blossom.

"How about I just talk to them? While you guys seem so small to the two of them—maybe even enemies—I can simply talk! I'm known being a great talker and pacifist, just saying", Bruno suggested. Blossom snapped her finger and smiled wide.

"Great idea!", she complimented. Bruno blushed out of happy embarrassment. It's obvious that he's just flattered. "Aww, Blossom!", Bruno swooned.

"Anyways, I should get my plan on sailing. I'll see you by then!", Bruno informed them. He walked away upon saying that, away from the duo and into the dark corner where the warzone was.

Blossom smiled, while Aster stared at Blossom. Simply seeing the side of her full, seemingly beautiful face. He turned his head down to the ground and covered his eyes with his shabby hair. Blossom noticed Aster's silence, eventually finding her head facing him. "Aster? Anything wrong?", she asked in concern. Aster looked up at her, but without saying a word, simply shook his head in denial. Blossom bit her mouth shut. Aster scraped his arm on top of his other. If Blossom was paying attention to Aster, it should be obvious that… he perhaps thinks of Blossom more than she's supposed to be for him.

Bruno entered a zone where he shouldn't have gone off to. Fighting was just a normal occurrence there. Everyone treated the other class as if they're prey. Acting on a snare of some sort to each other. Bruno was in the middle of it. He almost got hurt in the foot by being stepped by a Class 4 student.

Desperate to stopping it and to help Aster and Blossom, he called out "Hey, fellow 13-year-olds!". Everyone instantly noticed him—but not for him calling out—rather for him calling them "fellow 13-year-olds". Dexter snickered at that, knowing the meaning of it all. Thankfully, Bruno did what was he was ordered to do by his friends: To stop their petty classmates from fighting for a moment.

"I don't know what you're fighting over about, but I just want to—". Bruno got stopped by Michael who approached Bruno was a fuming prescence. His knuckled flared up. All cracked in unison. Peppermint approached Bruno too, but in a much softer manner. "Sorry, but how can you stop a fight when you don't even know the cause of it?", Michael asked. "And excuse me: But how don't you know our class's history?", Peppermint followed up.

Bruno gulped. He didn't know about any of those. It should be obvious why: He just came into this school, unknowing of the rich history of the school that he was apparently signing up for knowing. It was a confusing mess to a normal boy like Bruno who isn't usually required to comprehend all of this from a school. Nonetheless, he shrugged in embarrassment.

"Knew you didn't", Peppermint hissed.

"We were always at war, Bruno. Those friends? They just want you to stop something we started", Michael stated.

"Why are you fighting anyways? I mean, yeah, they told me that you guys are total opposites… so what?", Bruno asked them.

"So what is what we're fighting for: And it's for what value is the better. And I say: Being tough is better than being cute little passive angels who do no harm", Michael insulted all of Class 3 with. Everyone in that class glared at him. "But as for this specific day: We're fighting over which locker is the better", Michael added.

Bruno's eyes twitches. His brain was burning much more than Michael's. "All of this noise over lockers?", Bruno asked. He laughed out loud right after affirming that. "Oh my gosh! Really? My friends ran away because of that?", Bruno asked.

Aster and Blossom got stung by that, instantly running to Bruno and pulled him back, right out of the zone. “Sorry, sorry, sorry! We need to go and talk to… Team Toxic!”, Blossom chuckled. Bruno was about to talk, but got instantly turned down by a death-staring Aster. The three run off to the same corner they were at earlier.

“Goodness, where are the teachers? And why is this happening, again?”, Bruno asked repeatedly. Aster sighed, facepalming. “Bruno, you weren’t supposed to do that”, he grunted. Bruno realized. Smiling in a bit of shame and embarrassment, Bruno apologized with “Sorry. Guess I’m not as good as a confrontational guy as I thought I was”. “It’s ok! We don’t need to be in our classes anyways”, Blossom assured Bruno with a soft smile. Bruno smiled back.

He walked away. A momentary breeze felt through the trio’s hair, probably from the air conditioner. Blossom shivered. Aster couldn’t speak anymore.

Bruno got stopped by a classmate of his: Roselynn. She had her get-up, of course. A snazzy green wardrobe with an equally elegant emerald-colored purse. Her hair straightened up like always.

She stood straight in front of the ordinary boy. “Oh hey, Rose. What’s wrong?”, Bruno asked. She looked angrier than usual. It’s odd since she’s always characterized by her schoolmates to be calm and quiet. There’s no way she’d act like this to them.

“What’s wrong is the fact that you drifted off”, Roselynn answered, almost wearing a glare on her bland face. Winnie was actually approaching the two. She stood right beside Bruno, with an equally exploded expression. “Yah. You could’ve died, ya know!”, Winnie suddenly added.

Bruno, not expecting any of this happening, answered back with “Woah, first: I won’t. Everyone here except the workers and teachers are as old as us! And second: I had the permission of said teachers and workers. Thanks for not asking”.

Bruno’s sarcasm got to Winnie personally. Being the impulsive country girl that she is, she quickly yelled back with, “Hey! We didn’t know!”. Like always, she had a bit of a rough tone to her, though quite rougher than usual.

“It’s fine. We were just worried, Bruno”, Roselynn assured. Roselynn had a gesture that suggested something more—which is true. She corrected herself, saying

“Actually, it’s more of so Nadia worried. The rest of us knew that you’d in safe hands… but Nadia… Nadia was different”.

“That’s Nadia for you! She’s always so protective of me”, Bruno moaned. It’s true, however. Ever since Bruno did a certain deed for Nadia, she has been acting similarly to a helicopter parent to a child. It has always made Bruno fairly uncomfortable around her. Of course, he still cares about her as a friend. At the same time, he is aware that Nadia thinks of Bruno as… something more.

“We know. Violet told us the entire story”, Roselynn replied. “Let’s get back to class now before they think we’re lost”, she later suggested. She started walking away. Winnie raspberries at Bruno—as she usually does to him—and follows Roselynn. Bruno rolls his eyes, but smiles afterward. He follows his classmates soon enough.

“What was happening over there anyways, hm?”, Roselynn inquired Bruno on the way back. Bruno stared at Roselynn for a moment, but got back to normal. While doing so, Roselynn grew a bit uncomfortable. Bruno’s stare was… cold. Made him distant in some way. He answered anyhow. “Some fight between Class 3 and 4. That’s normal, isn’t it?”, Bruno asked.

Roselynn nodded. Winnie gave her two cents on the topic. “Totally! They fight once in every week. Those fights fill up the newsletters, ya know!”, Winnie answered Bruno. “Newsletters?”, Bruno asked, more concerned about that rather than the frequent fights. “There are newsletters for the school?”.

“Yup! I don’t know who’ll run them this here year, but Manny ran it last year! He’s someone at Class 4 over there. Actually, every student who has a job in the school is from there! I think they’re admitted to the job because of some student there named Hannah”, Winnie explained.

Roselynn scoffed at Winnie’s last statement about Hannah. “Winnie! How many times do I have to repeat this?”, Roselynn hissed at Winnie. Winnie flinched for a moment before Roselynn continued talking. Roselynn inhaled, then exhaled, then explained further.

“Bruno, don’t take Winnie’s last few words on Hannah”, she briefly explained. “Who is Hannah?”, Bruno asked. “Ah. Hannah. I remember talking to her since yesterday… but that was third grade”, Roselynn reminiscences.

“You see: Hannah is the one who came up with the class system. She is responsible for every rule. Every order, and like Winnie said, every job. The yearbook editor, the presidents, the journalist and lots of other ones are run by her”, Roselynn explained. “Well, until Michael took over. Before, Hannah had to look over Drake’s Palace, but when Michael became grade president, all future hangouts are now free and has to be judged by the teachers”.

Bruno thought about it. He remembered exactly what happened with Craig’s Ground. He wondered how things would be if Hannah was still around to boss everyone—if she even was bossy. According to Roselynn’s description, she wasn’t **that** bad… was she?

Right after that, the name “Michael” came back to him. It was the name of the one and only president of Class 4. Indeed, Michael wasn’t only the president of Class 4 but also the president of the entire grade. How gifted is Michael if he is responsible for every damage a class makes? How responsible is he himself? Bruno pondered over and over to himself until…

The three finally reached where Class 2 was. Now they’re a line instead of a dispersed mess. Bruno bit his tongue before he could say anything himself. “Bruno, there you are!”, Mrs. Garcia yelled. Bruno’s once-bitten tongue now grew fiery as he talked back, “Hey! Didn’t you say I could go?”.

“Yes, but not for long”, Mrs. Garcia responded. “It’s fine either way. We should continue the tour, shall we?”, she asked Amanda. Amanda was strangely happy as ever.

“Of course! Right this way. There should the stairs to the next floor”, Amanda told everyone as she pointed to the right of the room. Everyone went so except for Bruno who approached Amanda instead.

“Amanda, I know this might not be your job: but there’s a fight going on between two classes. Can you do anything about it?”, Bruno asked.

“Unfortunately, no. This is up to those classes tour guides. Either Elizabeth for Class 1, Mariah for Class 3 or Angela for Class 4. I bet it’s the latter two though. I’ve heard from those Class 1 monkeys about how they’re going through some long-standing feud—Montague and Capulet from Romeo and Juliet-style. It’s ridiculous!”, Amanda explained.

Bruno was left speechless. He didn't know if he should comment on the Romeo and Juliet comparison, or the fact that there are more than one tour guides. Though he shouldn't be surprised on the latter, since one tour guide can't possibly guide everyone. "Thanks for telling", Bruno thanked. He walked away, catching up with his classmates.

Bruno approached Alex who was actually somehow holding a book on his palms, reading it while walking. It's a surprise how he hasn't fell down yet, especially since he's the last in line. "Wow, Alex. Multitasking, huh?", Bruno asked, almost in a sarcastic tone but not really. Alex noticed, shutting the book up. "Yeah…", replied Alex.

Awkward silence followed. The air conditioner air breezed through their short hair as everyone including them walked through the empty station. At that point, it was obvious that Alex was hiding something important. So important that it's best if Bruno doesn't know—at the very least in his mind. Soon enough, the silence broken up by Bruno.

"What's wrong? And what was that book you were reading?", Bruno asked. Alex cleared his throat. He does so a lot of times, but Bruno never actually noticed until that point. He didn't point it out, yet he knew something strange is going to come out of his best friend's mouth. "It's that book of yours… You know", Alex answered suspiciously. To prove it, he shoved the book he was reading—Book 7—to Bruno.

"And in order…?", Bruno followed up, pushing the book aside. Alex nodded. He continued reading as he did before Bruno confronted him. "I'm a fast reader, Bruno. I read that second book in seconds!", Alex stated about himself.

Bruno shocked up. "Second book?!", Bruno exclaimed. "But I never gave you any book before Book 4!", he added.

"Did you forget? After you hung that paper on that bulletin board about this book, I asked you to send me some copies that you had at that time. I decided to read it for all-time's sake right now", Alex explained.

"Oh, I remember now!", Bruno chuckled. Alex rolled his eyes, nearing to a facepalm. "Honestly though, these titles are ridiculous!", Alex criticized. "I mean, Newbies and Ghouls? How in the whole planet would that make a bestseller?", he

continued. Bruno scoffed it off. “It’s a work in progress, Alex. Do you really expect a 13-year-old to write like Stephen Hawkings or something?”, Bruno retorted back.

“Good point, I suppose…”, Alex gave up. Alex seemed… somewhat afraid of Bruno, which made sense. Bruno stared at Alex. Deep into his soul. Alex doesn’t know how, but Bruno somehow did so. [redacted] He continued reading, back to his silent mode. Somehow, this whole time, they still followed their classmates. None were even amused by the conversation.

Meanwhile, the girls in the front, which were 4, kept begging Amanda on something personal. Well, personal to the station that is. “Oh, Amanda! Just tell me and the daughter of Wendy Stills about that candy pool!”, Carly begged on her knees. Amanda raised her eyebrows on that last sentence.

“Wendy Stills, you say? This girl with the curly hair here? She doesn’t look a lot like her! Hah!”, Amanda giggled. Sarah blew a blocking hair strand, instantly stomping towards Amanda afterward. “So what if I don’t look like my mom?”, Sarah asked.

“Fine. I just find it a little funny but nice at the same time! I never knew this small school would be full of surprises…”, Amanda swooned. “Ah. I shouldn’t expect much from the school with rumored cults and paranormal activity though”, she told herself back.

“The school is haunted?”, Bruno asked. Max, who was in front of Bruno, and Renard turned back to Bruno. “Not entirely”, Max answered. “It’s a rumor! Heh! You didn’t hear?”, Renard snickered. Alex scoffed, finally slipping the book back into his backpack. “For your correction: It’s reported, not rumored. There’s a difference”, Alex argued. Renard scowled at Alex, changing his smile instantly. It caught Bruno off guard, but not Alex. Alex was used to Renard being a bit… aggressive when being told he’s wrong. Really, he only behaves this way towards schoolmates.

Carly scoffed at the arguing group in the back and turned her attention back to Amanda, alongside the other three girls, Sarah, Nadia and Bella. “Oh please, Amanda! We’ll be as dead as a turkey in Thanksgiving if you don’t let us go! Jolie s'il-vous-plaît!”, Bella continuously begged. Amanda rolled her eyes. Knowing how

overdramatic theater kids can get, Bella probably isn't the worst drama queen for Amanda. "What she said", Nadia awkwardly added.

"Fine. If you really want the candy fountains so much, Diana will probably know. While I know every inch of this place even with my eyes closed, I'll not guide you everywhere here! Just a starter", Amanda explained softly. The girls finally left Amanda alone. Everyone else got out of the line as the radio jacks came into the room.

Upon splitting up, Amanda looked at the girls' sad eyes. Their hearts were broken upon hearing that news. Amanda sighed, knowing she'll immediately be regretting what she's going to say next. "Alright, I'll show you", she gave in.

The girls cheered and followed Amanda out of the hall. Mrs. Garcia watched in amusement. "A candy pool?", Mrs. Garcia scoffed. "Those are things of my childhood dreams", she said to herself. "Who are you talking to, miss?", Craig asked. Mrs. Garcia almost jumped out of the seat she was sitting on, which was a normal, blue chair.

"Oh my—Craig! How many times do I have to tell you this?!", Mrs. Garcia yelled. Craig chuckled like how he usually does. "Heh-heh-heh", it goes. "Excuse me miss. I really didn't mean to. I honestly just came here to point at that", Craig explained. Craig pointed at Connor who was endlessly talking to the radio jacks.

Mrs. Garcia noticed after a moment or so. Her eyes grew tired by that point. She got it already—Connor was obsessed with the radio jacks. "Yes, Craig. I know", Garcia sighed, wishing to be left alone and allowed to have some space. Craig grinded his teeth